LICE PROTOCOL

Definition – A scalp infection with tiny gray bugs called lice

Symptoms
- Itching of the scalp is the main symptom.
- A scalp rash may be present. The back of the neck is the favorite area.

Lice and nits
- Lice are 1/16-inch (2 mm) long, gray-colored, move quickly, and are difficult to see.
- Nits are white eggs firmly attached to hair shafts near the skin. Unlike dandruff or sand, nits can’t be shaken off the hair shafts.
- The nits are easier to see than the lice because they are white and very numerous.

Lifespan of lice
- The nits (eggs) hatch into lice in about 1 week.
- Nits (eggs) that are over ½ inch (1 cm) from the scalp are empty egg cases and very white in color.
- Off the scalp, nits can’t survive over 2 weeks.
- Adult lice survive 3 weeks on the scalp or 24 hours off the scalp.

Cause
- A tiny insect the size of a sesame seed

Transmission of head lice: live lice, not nits
- Only live lice can transmit lice to another child.
- Nits (lice eggs) cannot transmit lice because they are attached to the child’s hair.
- Almost all transmission is from direct head-to-head (hair-to-hair) contact. Lice cannot jump or fly to another person’s hair.
- Indirect transmission of lice from hats, caps, hair brushes, combs, headphones and other objects is very uncommon.
- Most transmission of lice occurs at home, not school or other public places. Sleepovers and bed-sharing are a major source.

Return to school
- Your child can return to child care or school after 1 anti-lice treatment.
- A child with head lice doesn’t need to miss any school or child care because of the presence of nits, because nits are not contagious.

Home Care Advice/Treatment for Head Lice

Reassurance
- Head lice can be treated at home.
- With careful treatment, all lice and nits (lice eggs) are usually killed.
- There are no lasting problems from having head lice.
- They do not carry any diseases.
- They do not make your child feel sick.
**Cleaning the house**

- Lice that are off the body rarely cause reinfection. (Reason: lice can't live for over 24 hours off the human body.) Just vacuum your child's room.
- Soak hair brushes for 1 hour in a solution containing some anti-lice shampoo.
- Wash your child's sheets, blankets, pillow cases, and any clothes worn in the past 2 days in hot water (130° F or 54° C) kills lice and nits.
- Optional step (probably not necessary): Items that can't be washed (e.g., hats, coats, or scarves) should be set aside in sealed plastic bags for 2 weeks (the longest period that nits can survive).

**First Try: Cetaphil cleanser**

- Go to your drugstore and buy **Cetaphil cleanser** (no prescription needed) in the soap department. It works by coating the lice and suffocating them.
- Apply the Cetaphil cleanser throughout the scalp to dry hair.
- After all the hair is wet, wait 2 minutes for Cetaphil to soak in.
- Comb out as much excess cleanser as possible.
- Blow dry your child's hair. It has to be thoroughly dry down to the scalp to suffocate the lice. Expect this to take 3 times longer then it would if the hair was just wet with water.
- The dried Cetaphil will smother the lice. Leave it on your child's hair for at least 8 hours.
- In the morning, wash off the Cetaphil with a regular shampoo.
- Comb out the nits - **THIS IS THE MOST IMPORTANT PART OF THE PROCESS**
- To cure your child of lice, REPEAT this process twice in 1 and 2 weeks.
- The cure rate can be 97%.

An alternative to this treatment is an over the counter product called **Quit Nits**. Although the efficacy of this product has not been studied, it also works by suffocating the lice and comes in an easy to use kit.

**IF CETAPHIL DOES NOT WORK: ULESFIA**

- Ulesfia is a Prescription medicine for Lice
- It is 5% benzoyl alcohol
- If it is not covered by insurance it costs about $60
- Apply Ulesfia to scalp. Saturate the hair and scalp. Leave on for 10 minutes. Then rinse out with water.
- Comb out the nits
- Repeat in 7 days
- This is for 6 months and older only
References

15. Seattle Children's Hospital Lice protocol